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C O N F I D E N T I A L CONAKRY 000207

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SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/06/2019
TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL ASEC GV
SUBJECT: COMINGS AND GOINGS AT CONAKRY'S CENTRAL PRISON

REF: CONAKRY 00202

Classified By: POLOFF J. TULLY FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. PolOff met with prison NGO contact who provided an official list of prisoners -- all members of the Guinean armed forces -- who were reportedly freed from Conakry's central jail by CNDD members immediately following the coup. Contact confirmed that ex-Minister of Mines, Ahmed Kante, had arrived at the jail and provided PolOff with a list of 28 civilian prisoners allegedly incarcerated since the coup. END SUMMARY.

GET OUT OF JAIL FREE CARD

¶2. (C) PolOff met with NGO ASWAR (Support for Refugees and Displaced Persons in Detention) Director Soraya Laghifiri who had offered information regarding prisoners of interest held at Surete National, Conakry's central prison downtown. Dr. Laghifiri provided a copy of an official document detailing the early and irregular release of 34 members of the Guinean Armed Forces who were held in Surete, prior to the coup d'etat on December 23. More than half of these prisoners were being held for armed robbery, while others were incarcerated for murder and trafficking in cocaine. The document details that most of the 34 prisoners were released on the authority of prominent members of the CNDD four days after the coup, and the last released on January 13.

EX-MINISTER OF MINES KANTE ARRIVES

¶3. (C) Dr. Laghifiri confirmed that ex-Minister of Mines Ahmed Kante had just arrived at the prison (reftel) and was being held in a special room along with several recently arrested police officers. Although the room is large, it reportedly has no beds. Laghifiri noted that the minister's cell mates were bringing in food. Kante joins ex-Security Minister Mohamed Damba who is also now incarcerated at Surete.

¶4. (C) A second official document was provided that concerned Laghifiri because of its inaccuracy. The document lists 28 civilian prisoners, reportedly arrested since the coup, and held at Surete for a variety of reasons. However, according to ASWAR about ten of the prisoners are not at Surete and their whereabouts are unknown. Several prisoners on the list were from Colombia, Cape Verde, Nigeria, Mali, and were being held for international drug trafficking. Others were in on marijuana charges while one hapless student was detained for "expressing outrage at an officer exercising his duties."

¶5. (C) COMMENT. The early release of the 34 prisoners by the CNDD appears to be inconsistent with CNDD President Dadis' vigorous commitment to root out corruption in Guinea, which currently is targeting the civilian population. Even in the best of times, the Guinean justice system is fraught with problems. Embassy continues to monitor the situation closely. END COMMENT.

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